IAAPA® EXPO 2026

A GUIDE TO IAAPA EXPO

FOR FIRST TIME ATTENDEES

NOV. 16 - 20 | ORLANDO, FL

Welcome to IAAPA 2026!

You're about to experience your first IAAPA Expo, and we couldn't be more excited for you. This is the week our whole industry comes together — and this guide is here to help you make the most of it.

We know a first IAAPA Expo can feel like a lot. That's exactly why IAAPA and Themed Entertainment Jobs put this guide together: to help you walk in feeling ready, not overwhelmed.

Take it one day at a time, say yes to new conversations, and don't worry about seeing everything. Everyone here started as a first-timer once.

This is the biggest IAAPA Expo has ever been, and with all of the new programming, additional spaces, and inclusion of the West Building - even industry veterans will have questions - so don't be afraid to ask for help and we can all learn together!

If you are interested in a more in-depth guide, specifically designed for folks who are interested in entering the Themed Entertainment Design and Production industry, check out the larger version of this guide on ThemedEntertainmentJobs.com

We're so glad you're joining us. See you on the show floor,

IAAPA North America and Themed Entertainment Jobs Teams

What is IAAPA Expo?

IAAPA Expo in Orlando is the world's largest attractions industry trade show, bringing together professionals from amusement parks, theme parks, family entertainment centers, water parks, museums, and attractions around the world to discover the latest innovations, explore new products and services, and make valuable industry connections.

In 2026, IAAPA Expo will be bigger than ever! For the first time, the trade show floor will expand across both the South and West Buildings of the Orange County Convention Center, featuring more than 630,000 square feet of exhibit space and over 1,350 exhibitors. From groundbreaking attractions and emerging technologies to innovative design, fabrication, and operational solutions, attendees will discover new ideas and opportunities to grow their businesses.

Beyond the trade show floor, IAAPA Expo offers more than 170 educational opportunities covering topics such as operations, marketing, accessibility, safety, technology, leadership, and emerging industry trends. Attendees can gain practical insights from industry experts, exchange ideas with peers, and discover strategies to take back to their organizations.

For those looking to experience the industry firsthand, IAAPA Expo's popular EDUTours provide exclusive behind-the-scenes access to some of Central Florida's leading attractions. Space is limited, and tours often sell out, so advance registration is encouraged.

IAAPA Expo is also a place to build lasting connections and advance your career. From networking events to professional development opportunities, attendees at every career stage can connect with industry leaders and peers. The Young Professionals Hub offers a dedicated space for emerging professionals to network, learn, and explore opportunities for growth.

At the Show

Getting Around the Show Floor

With IAAPA Expo 2026 expanding across both the South and West Buildings, navigating the largest show floor in Expo history is easier than you might think!

Understanding Booth Numbers

Every booth number begins with a W for the West Building or an S for the South Building, helping you quickly identify where you need to go.
Once you're in the correct building, booth numbers can help guide your way:

- First two digits: Indicate the booth's location from west to east, starting with 01XX near the West Wall and increasing toward 61XX near the East Wall.
- Last two digits: Indicate the booth's location from south to north, with XX00 closer to the South Wall and XX90 closer to the North Wall.

Finding Your Way

Look for large directional signs along the walls and overhead throughout the show floor. Need a little extra help? Exhibitor locator stations are available throughout the show floor, and the Connect+ App features an interactive map to help you search for exhibitors, locate booths, and plan your route.

Explore Beyond the Booths

There's more to discover on the show floor than ever before! Experience attractions in action, sample food and beverage offerings, gain new insights at the EDUTalk Stage, step inside immersive haunt experiences at Haunting Grounds, and discover exciting innovations around every corner.
Take your time, explore both buildings, and make the most of everything IAAPA Expo 2026 has to offer!

Check out the show floor of both the South and West Buildings before you arrive!

Education

Education is a big part of the IAAPA Expo experience each year, bringing together experts and thought leaders from across the attractions industry to share insights, best practices, emerging trends, and real-world solutions. With sessions covering a wide range of topics and industry segments, there are opportunities to learn something valuable no matter your role or area of expertise.

Education is also a great way to connect. Sessions bring together professionals facing similar opportunities and challenges, making them a natural place to meet new people, exchange ideas, and build connections with peers from across the industry.

Education programming will take place across both the South and West buildings, so be sure to explore the full agenda and plan ahead. An easy way to know if your education session is in the West or South Building is by looking at the room number, which will note a “W” or “S ”in the beginning of the number for ease of access. All of the education rooms in both the South & West Buildings are on the 3rd floor. The Education Conference is included at no additional cost for IAAPA members who register for IAAPA Expo.

You can find session details, locations, and the full education agenda here.

Make More of Your IAAPA Expo Experience with Special Events



From the Leadership Breakfast and Water Park Day to IAAPA Celebrates, special events give you even more ways to experience IAAPA Expo. Whether you’re looking to hear from industry leaders, connect with professionals who share your interests, experience attractions firsthand, or simply build new relationships in a more relaxed setting, there’s a special event for everyone.

While special events require an additional ticket, the experiences, insights, and connections you can take away make them a valuable addition to your week. Space may be limited for select events, so explore your options in Connect+ and add the experiences that are right for you.

IAAPA Expo Checklist

Planning:

- Download the official IAAPA Connect+ App
- Download IAAPA Guide 2026
- Review the show floor map and research companies you might be interested in talking to
- Review attendees and reach out to make connections before the show starts
- Review the EDUSessions, EDUTours and register for any separately ticketed programs or receptions you are interested in
- Download Themed Entertainment Jobs IAAPA Guide 2026



Preparation:

- Update your LinkedIn
- Download your LinkedIn QR Code
- Order Business Cards
- Update your Portfolio or Website
- Make sure to have comfortable shoes

Getting There:

- Confirm your accommodations
- Plan your travel to and from the Expo

Plan Ahead and Set Your Goals

Your first IAAPA Expo is full of possibilities! From discovering innovative products and attending inspiring EDUSessions to making new connections and experiencing exciting attractions on the show floor, there is so much to see and do.

To make the most of your experience, we recommend setting two or three goals before you arrive. Whether you're looking to grow your professional network, explore career opportunities, or gain industry insights, having a plan will help you make every moment count.

Be sure to leave room for spontaneous discoveries, unexpected connections, and a little fun along the way! Take breaks, stay hydrated, and explore at your own pace. Some of the best IAAPA Expo experiences happen when you least expect them.

Getting to the Show

Parking & Ride Share

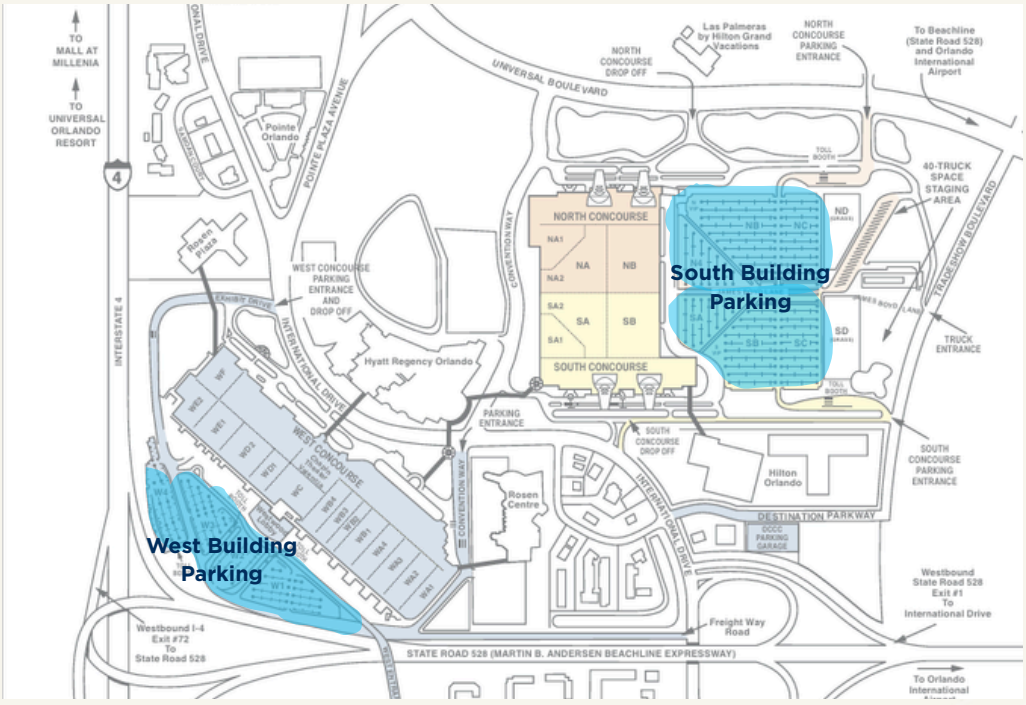
Parking at the Convention Center lot is available on a first-come, first-served basis, including accessible parking and EV charging spaces. It's $20 per vehicle, per entry for passenger vehicles, and $40 for oversize vehicles. You cannot exit the parking lot and then re-enter without having to pay again. So if you plan on perhaps leaving to get lunch or take a meeting nearby, it may be easier to use a ride-sharing app or local transport options. Also note that overnight parking isn't allowed.

Parking at Destination Parkway Garage is $15 and a complimentary shuttle service operates between to/from the concourse. Alternatively, there is also off-site parking available.
Take a photo of where you parked! After a long conference day, it's easy to get lost.

If you intend to take an Uber or Lyft or other ride-share service, make sure you are getting dropped off at the correct address. IAAPA Expo is spanning across both the South Building and West Building in 2026, so be sure to put your ride-share location at the correct building.

The street address for the **South Building** is 9899 International Drive, Orlando, FL 32819

The street address for the **West Building** is 9800 International Drive, Orlando, FL 32819



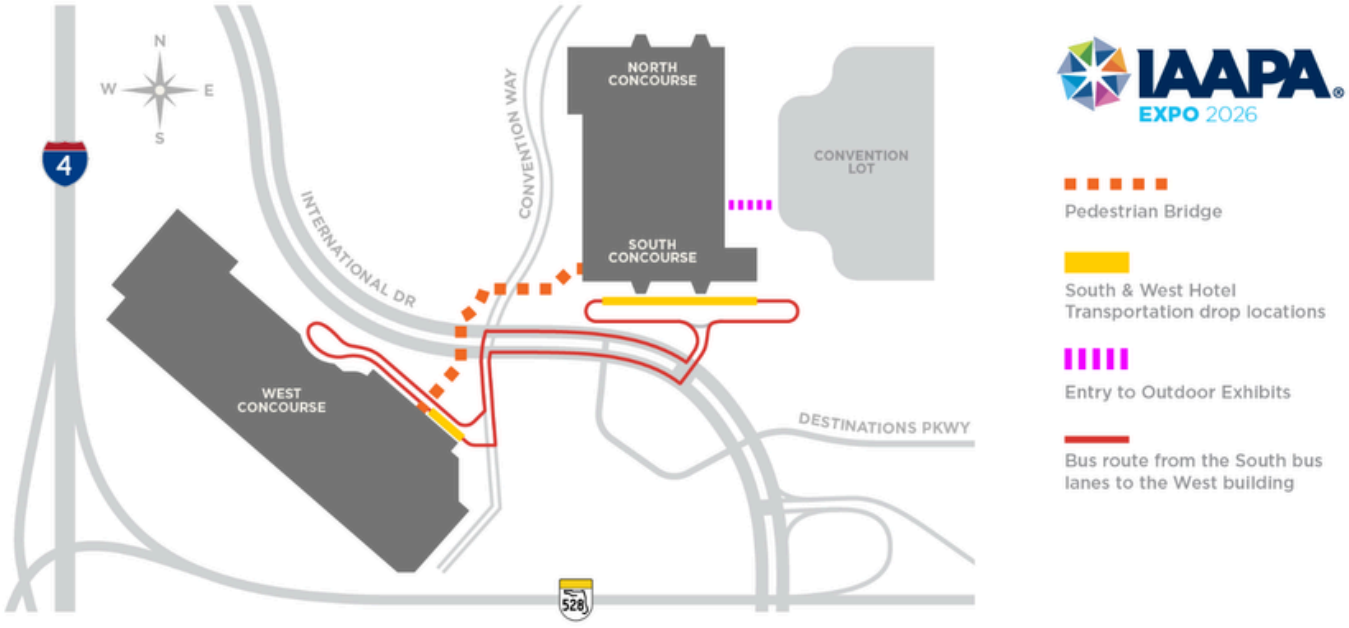
Getting Around IAAPA Expo

With IAAPA Expo expanding across two buildings, getting around is easier than you think!

Attendees can park at either the South or West Building, with the trade show floor spanning the entire South Building exhibit floor and Halls A/B in the West Building. A pedestrian walkway connects both buildings in less than a 10-minute walk, or attendees can hop on complimentary shuttles running continuously throughout the day between the two buildings.



BUS ROUTES AND ENTRY MAP



View shuttle schedule between OCCC and hotels here.
View shuttle schedule between South & West Buildings here.

Hotel Shuttles

If you are staying at one of the hotels near the convention center, a shuttle bus may be available to take you directly to the convention center from your hotel. It is also an option to park at one of the hotels and taking the shuttle instead of paying for parking at the convention center. If you are taking a shuttle, make sure you give yourself plenty of time to get there as this will add quite a bit of time to the travel, especially first thing in the morning when there are a lot of people trying to get to the convention center at the same time.

Hotel Pick-Up Locations

Castle Hotel:
Curbside on Universal Blvd.

Courtyard by Marriott I-Drive/CC:
Curbside on Austrian Court

Hotel Kinetic Orlando:
Curbside on Universal Blvd.

Doubletree by Hilton Orlando at SeaWorld: Lobby bus lane

Embassy Suites International Drive:
I-Ride trolley stop #17

Embassy Suites International Drive/I Drive 360 on Jamaican Court:
Curbside on Jamaican Court

Fairfield Inn CC:
Curbside on Universal Blvd.

Fairfield Inn SeaWorld:
Front of hotel

Hampton Inn International Drive/ Convention Center:
At fountain by Residence Inn

Hilton Garden Inn at SeaWorld:
Curbside in front of hotel on Westwood Blvd.

Hilton Orlando:
Walking distance to hotel; no shuttle needed (bus service only for IAAPA Celebrates)

Homewood Suites I-Drive:
at fountain by Residence Inn

Hyatt Regency Orlando:
Walking distance to hotel; no shuttle needed (bus service only for IAAPA Celebrates)

Las Palmeras-Hilton Grand:
Front of hotel

Residence Inn CC:
At fountain by Residence Inn

Residence Inn SeaWorld:
Westwood Blvd. side of hotel

Rosen Centre Hotel:
Walking hotel, no shuttle needed (bus service only for IAAPA Celebrates)

Rosen Plaza Hotel:
I-Ride trolley stop #20

Springhill Suites CC/I-Drive:
at Fountain by Residence Inn

Tru by Hilton:
Curbside on Westwood Blvd.

Vista Cay Resort by Millenium:
Curbside on Cayview Ave.

Wyndham Orlando Resort:
Convention entrance

First Time Attendee Events

Events Designed for First-Timers

IAAPA is excited to welcome first-timers to IAAPA Expo 2026. With this commitment in mind, IAAPA has designed several opportunities for first-time attendees to network with other first-time attendees along with seasoned professionals, to make sure you are getting the most out of your IAAPA Expo experience.

IAAPA Expo First-Timer Welcome Event
Monday, Nov. 16 | 4 – 5 p.m.
Location: West Building W307ABCD

Are you attending the IAAPA Expo for the first time? Join us for this information session to ensure a successful and rewarding IAAPA Expo experience. This program is designed to equip first-time attendees with essential tools and resources to assist in navigating IAAPA Expo with ease and confidence.

Attendees can expect a welcome and overview from IAAPA North America's Vice President & Executive Director, Todd Andrus, and to participate in a lighthearted networking activity led by Heather Barnes, Chair of IAAPA North America's Education Committee.

IAAPA Expo First-Timer Mingle
Monday, Nov. 19 | 5 – 6 p.m.
Location: West Building - IAAPA Young Professionals Hub, W203

New to IAAPA Expo? Join fellow first-time attendees to connect with industry peers, swap tips, discover can't-miss experiences, and get insider advice on making the most of your Expo week.

IAAPA After Hours
Tuesday, Nov. 17 | 6 – 8 p.m.
Location: West Building A/B Lobby

Continue the conversations started on the show floor in a fun, relaxed setting designed for networking and connection. Join fellow attendees in the West Building for IAAPA After Hours, a complimentary networking event featuring a cash bar, lively entertainment, and the opportunity to reconnect with colleagues, meet new industry professionals, and build lasting relationships across the global attractions industry.

Don't miss out on the First Timer's Corner to connect with the IAAPA team who can help show you the lay of the land and connect you with other members.

See the IAAPA Expo Agenda 2026 here.

ABOUT THEMED ENTERTAINMENT JOBS

Themed Entertainment Jobs is a volunteer-run resource dedicated to connecting people, opportunities, and organizations across the themed entertainment industry. Since 2019, we've helped make industry opportunities and information more accessible through thousands of job listings, career resources, and our annual guide to IAAPA Expo.

Whether this is your first IAAPA Expo or your fifteenth, we believe everyone should feel equipped to make the most of their time here. With so much expanded programming and a whole new concourse this year we've partnered with IAAPA North America to bring some of our favorite tips directly to the show floor—helping you navigate, connect, and experience everything Expo has to offer.

Want more?
For advice on preparing for Expo, networking, portfolios and resumes, what to pack, getting around Orlando, following up after the show, and much more, check out the Themed Entertainment Jobs Guide to IAAPA Expo 2026.